

## INTERNATIONAL

# President Clinton's Africa trip: Photo-Op or trade mission?

## America's Blacks also need Clinton's attention, assistance

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

President Clinton couldn't have found a better time to visit Africa.

The 11-day trip through six African countries had been in planning for two years. It shored up his political capital among African-Americans; put the planet's largest continent on the map for trade and tourism; and got Clinton away from the persistent investigations into his business and personal affairs.

The trip combined significant photo opportunities with African heads of state. Although he called it a "trade mission," many said his visit didn't fully encompass what would be done to improve trade. The question remains: "Was the trip more for image than reality?"

Clinton wants to show Africans that Americans aren't unaware of, or indifferent, to their continent except when they made headlines through famine, ethnic killings and corrupt dictatorships.

The first American president to take such an extensive trip in this continent, Clinton showed large parts of Africa moving on a promising path toward stability, democracy and economic growth. The nature of the trip was good, but the problems for blacks in Africa, as well as America, are paradoxical. Largest among the continents in area, second largest in population, and arguably the richest of all in terms of natural resources, its people are among the poorest in the world.

### Business Exchange

By William Reed,  
publisher of *Who's Who in Black Corporate America*.



Africa's people are hard-working and intelligent, and the continent can boast of having produced great civilizations long before today's developed countries came into existence. But the vast gap between contemporary Africa's level of economic development and that of every other area of the world is growing. In America's land of plenty, blacks are the lowest of any ethnic group's economic ranking.

The African continent is a more significant trading partner for us than most people realize. Both the reality and the potential warrant much greater attention. Backed up by the Congressionally-approved African Growth and Opportunity Act and a 75 percent approval rating among blacks in America, President Clinton had

more than 1,000 people accompany him on the historic trip.

The magnitude of U.S.-Africa trade (\$23.4 billion in 1994) comes to two percent of the U.S.'s overall foreign trade of \$1.2 trillion. U.S. exports to Africa are almost \$9.2 billion. America imports some \$14.3 billion from Africa, creating a trade deficit of about \$5.1 billion. Over the past three years, Africa has exhibited a four percent annual growth rate while U.S. trade with Africa has grown by 32.1 percent.

U.S. Commerce says U.S. investment in sub-Saharan Africa generated a return of 31 percent in 1996, compared with 12 percent in Latin America and 13 percent in the Asia-Pacific region. Now, the U.S. wants to engage sub-Saharan Africa countries as trading equals. Clinton and entourage insisted the old donor and recipient pattern which has defined U.S. and African relations is being replaced by new and dynamic programs based on it being in their mutual economic interests to promote programs, policies and strategies that reduce poverty through economic growth, self-reliance and commerce.

Clinton should also help shore up black areas in America, with commitments for economic growth and commerce to improve our quality of life.

On the continent of Africa, 266 million people live on less than one dollar a day. In urban America, the majority of blacks live in environments that are no different than Third World cities?

## WORLD BRIEFS

### POPULATION GROWTH REMAINS AFRICA'S GREATEST CHALLENGE

HARARE, Zimbabwe (PANA) — Zimbabwe, Kenya, South Africa and Botswana have reached a critical turning point in their efforts to adjust to rapid population growth while boosting poor records on reproductive health, according to a recent international study. Population Action International commissioned a study that concluded the sub-Saharan region's prospects for economic development largely depend on the success or failure of governments in accelerating efforts to expand family planning services and to combat deaths in pregnancy and childbirth and from AIDS. The study found that two-thirds of countries in the region had active family planning programs, up significantly since the early 1980s. "This dramatic change in government policy has been accompanied by a fundamental shift in people's attitudes towards child bearing," the study concluded. "Urbanization, the rising cost of education and other basic needs, and the improved chances of survival for children are all affecting the traditional preference for large families. The decline in birth rates, limited a decade ago to a few countries in the region, is spreading steadily across the continent." Among the world's women, sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 40 percent of all pregnancy related deaths. "During her lifetime, an African woman has a one in five chance of dying in pregnancy or childbirth — odds over 200 times greater than those faced by women in the United States," the study said.

### LIBYA, SOUTH AFRICA AGREEMENT POOLS RESOURCES IN SEVERAL AREAS

TRIPOLI, Libya (PANA) — Libya and South Africa have signed a cooperation accord in the fields of economics, culture, agriculture, information and energy. The two countries will also cooperate in investment, communication, rail transport and technical training, according to a protocol agreement signed May 3 in Tripoli between Omar Montassir, secretary-general of the Libyan People's General Committee for External Relations and International Cooperation, and Aziz Pahad, the South African deputy minister of Foreign Affairs. Pahad, who led a high-level delegation, left Tripoli after the signing the concluding event of his three-day visit to Libya. During the visit, Pahad also held talks with several Libyan officials, including Col. Mustapha Kharroubi, Inspector-General of the Libyan Armed Forces, and secretaries for economy and trade, agriculture and unity, energy and communications.

## South Africa's election countdown gaining steam

By Tag Williams

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (AIA/GIN) — South Africa has set aside 500 million South African rands for the first post-apartheid general elections scheduled for next year.

The elections, to be held under a different political system and contested by a largely younger political leadership, are set to determine South Africa's face for the new century.

Former president F.W. de Klerk has already left active politics. President Nelson Mandela retired as party chief in December and will leave government next year. As leader of the opposition National Party, De Klerk was replaced by a much younger Martinus van Schalkyk, while Mandela's deputy, Thabo Mbeki, will lead the African National Congress.

Political parties have

already begun to set themselves up for 1999. Fund-raising campaigns are in full swing. The ruling ANC party says it needs 150 million SARTO cover the costs of the election.

"We have evaluated every province and we are under no illusion that we are guaranteed victory in any one of them. Each province will be approached according to its political dynamics," said Kgalema Motlanthe, ANC secretary general.

Unlike the 1994 elections that ushered in a democratic state, the 1999 elections mark a major change in the way South Africa's polling system operates. The country, which will be divided into various constituencies, will incorporate 1996 census figures into the broader geographical and demographic map and prepare a comprehensive voters roll.

Mandla Mchunu, the chief electoral officer of the Independence Electoral

Commission, said preparations for a massive voter registration exercise are underway. "In 1994, we allowed our people to use their identity documents to vote," he said. "Next year it will be different."

Registration begins in October. About 60,000 officials are expected to have pushed 23 million people to vote by December, making it possible for a provisional roll to be ready by mid-January 1999.

"We are confident that while we face numerous challenges, the 1999 elections will be a blueprint for the open, transparent and cost-effective management of all future elections," Mchunu said. He also said the ANC and other political parties have to encourage a new group of qualifying voters to register.

The United Democratic Movement has been campaigning vigorously since last July, taking supporters and

political waverers from the White liberal establishment and the Black electorate fed up with what they see as an ANC government slow to deliver on promises.

In Gauteng province, both the ANC and the Democratic Party see the UDM — led by Roelf Meyer and Bantu Holomisa — as the main threat to their electoral bases. Meyer and Holomisa are dissidents from the National Party and the ANC respectively.

The IEC plans to co-opt experts from the private sector for two weeks to help in the election process.

"The companies for which they work should be willing to release them on the basis that they would be making a contribution to the democratic process," Mchunu said.

At the peak of the election — the dates have yet to be announced — the IEC expects to employ around 300,000 people.

## Rwanda experiencing huge six-fold surge in AIDS

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

KIGALI, Rwanda — Migration and rape linked to Rwanda's 1994 genocide have led to a six-fold increase in cases of the virus that causes AIDS, the government said Monday.

More than 11 percent of adult Rwandans are infected with HIV, according to a study by the Health Ministry, compared to less than 2 percent in 1986, the last year for which figures were available.

Four percent of 12- to 14-year-olds — the youngest group included in the latest

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survey — tested positive for the virus.

The ministry tested and interviewed 4,800 people over two months for the survey.

Slightly more than 2 percent of respondents said they had been raped during or after the 1994 genocide, and 15 percent of them have since tested positive for HIV.

A majority of respondents said they had moved away from

their homes since 1994. Although respondents were not identified by ethnic group, most were likely Hutus, who make up 85 percent of Rwanda's population of 7 million.

Many respondents were among refugees who spent 2 1/2 years in camps before returning home in 1996.

At least a half-million people, most of them minority

Tutsis, were killed in 1994 in a Hutu government-orchestrated campaign aimed at wiping out the Tutsis. The life expectancy in Rwanda, estimated to be 50.1 years, will likely decrease because of rising AIDS cases, the survey said.

A U.N. report released in November estimated that two-thirds of the 30 million people with HIV or AIDS worldwide live in sub-Saharan Africa. The highest incidences of HIV were in Botswana, where about 25 percent of adults are infected, and Zimbabwe, where 22 percent had the virus.